

North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department Geocaching Policy

The North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department permits geocaching in keeping with its mission to provide and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities through diverse parks and programs. The purpose of this policy is to establish management guidelines for geocaching, so as to minimize impact on the natural and cultural resources managed by the department.

For purposes of this policy and the permit, the following definitions have been developed:

Cache - A hidden container filled with a logbook, pen/pencil, and possibly trinkets.

Geocaching - Geocaching is a game for GPS (Global Positioning Systems) users. The basic idea is to have individuals/organizations place caches and share the locations of these caches on the Internet. GPS users can then use the location coordinates to find the caches. Once found, the user records a find on <http://www.geocaching.com>.

Multi-cache - Multiple cache containers are located from information received from the previous container.

Virtual cache - A virtual cache means there is no cache container. It's the location that is the cache itself. Nothing is normally traded, except photos and experiences.

Guidelines:

1. Any visitor wishing to place a cache on state park property is required to complete and have approved an Official Geocaching Placement Permit.
2. Authority to approve the permits has been delegated to the park manager or their designee. Location of a cache will be approved by the site manager.
3. Caches will not be placed in sensitive archaeological, historical, or ecological areas such as historical buildings or locations that contain rare plant species.
4. Prescribed burn units are to be monitored for consideration of placement. If the desired location in an area that is scheduled to be burned within twelve months of the date of request, the unit is to be considered off limits for the placement of the cache.
5. The park manager or designee is required to inform the applicant of any areas that have been recognized as off limits for placing caches.
6. No digging or disruption of the ground is permitted when placing the cache.
7. Caches are not to be placed in areas that could potentially cause danger to visitors trying to locate the cache, i.e. climbing on cliffs/bluffs, underwater or in potential flood areas, in trees, etc.
8. Multi-caches are limited to three total sites, yet treated as one cache and require only one permit.
9. If any park staff determines that the location of a cache poses a risk to park visitors, the owner is to be contacted and asked that the cache be moved to a safer location. All information regarding the risk is to be recorded on the original permit. If the owner relocates the cache, a new permit must be generated.
10. If at any time the terms of a permit are violated, the park manager has the authority to void the permit, remove the cache from its location, attempt to notify the owner or indicate on www.geocaching.com that the cache has been removed. Justification for these actions is to be recorded on the permit.
11. If a non-permitted cache is discovered, park staff will remove the cache, retain it at the park office for 30 days and, if possible, attempt to notify the owner of their actions. In the

event a contact is not able to be made, the cache will be considered abandoned property. The property is to be retained in the event the owner comes to claim it at a later date.

12. A cache owner is limited to two cache permits in one park at a time.

13. No more than one cache can be allowed in parks less than 500 acres and two in parks larger than 500 acres. Parks are encouraged to place their own caches for interpretative and educational purposes. Park caches should also have a permit included in the file.

14. Permits are valid for 24 months from the approved date.

15. Park managers and staff are authorized and encouraged, but not required, to open a free account on www.geocaching.com, produce a watch list and monitor the activity of the caches in their facility.

Procedures

1. Cache owners wishing to place a cache on state park property must complete an Official Geocaching Placement Permit. The park manager or designee is to review the permit and the cache for policy compliance.

2. The cache containers must display the words "Official Geocache" clearly on the outside of the container.

3. An explanation of the geocaching activity is to be included in the container. (See the attached form for an example.)

4. The cache owner is to monitor the site monthly and maintain family friendly contents. This means the cache is not to contain food, alcohol, firearms, drugs, dangerous items or adult items.

5. Once the cache is placed, the applicant is to return to the facility office to record the exact location information for completion of the permit. The facility is to keep a park map indicating the exact cache locations in the file with the permits.

6. The park manager has the option of taking a photograph of the cache or asking the cache owner to provide a photograph(s) of the cache and attaching it to the permit.

7. After the permit has been completed the park manager or designee will approve or deny the permit. For approval, the following items need to be reviewed for policy compliance:

- Cache is not located in sensitive archaeological, historical or ecological areas.
- No damage or disturbance of the ground will result from placement of this cache.
- The cache is not located in an area scheduled to be burned during the duration of the permit.
- The cache is not in an area that might cause potential danger to park visitors, i.e. climbing on cliffs/bluffs under water or in potential flood areas, etc.
- Text for the cache has been reviewed, and it is accurate and complies with North Dakota State Parks Geocaching Policy.

Non-compliance of policy requirements will result in cache removal or denial of the permit.

8. The original copy of the completed permit is to remain on file at the park. A copy of the permit, approved or denied, is to be given to the cache owner. If the permit is denied, the justification is to be recorded on the permit.

This container has been placed here with permission of the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department.

GEOCACHE SITE - PLEASE READ

Congratulations, you've found it! Intentionally or not!

What is this hidden container sitting here for? What is this thing doing here with all these things in it? It is part of a worldwide game dedicated to GPS (Global Positioning System) users, called Geocaching. The game basically involves a GPS user hiding "treasure" (this container and its contents) and publishing the exact coordinates so other GPS users can come on a "treasure hunt" to find it. The only rules are: if you take something from the cache, you must leave something for the cache, and you must write about your visit in the logbook. Hopefully, the person that hid this container found a good spot that is not easily found by uninterested parties. Sometimes, a good spot turns out to be a bad spot, though.

IF YOU FOUND THIS CONTAINER BY ACCIDENT:

Great! You are welcome to join us! We ask only that you:

- Please do not move or vandalize the container. The real treasure is just finding the container and sharing your thoughts with everyone else who finds it.
- If you wish, go ahead and take something. But please also leave something of your own for others to find, and write it in the logbook.
- If possible, let us know that you found it, by visiting the web site listed below.

Geocaching is open to everyone with a GPS and a sense of adventure. There are similar sites all over the world. The organization has its home on the Internet. Visit our website if you want to learn more, or have any comments:

<http://www.geocaching.com>

If this container needs to be removed for any reason, please let us know. We apologize, and will be happy to move it.

Reference: **Official Geocaching Placement Permit**